Family Readiness Group's (FRG) Role in Unit Casualty

 Training will be conducted by ACS staff

Third Edition, 2006

IAW AR 608-1, Appendix J, the garrison Army Community Service (ACS) Center will provide training.

Objectives of FRG's Role When Casualty

- To review types of casualties
- To review Army response to casualties
- To identify what is and what is not the FRG's role when unit casualty occurs
- To discuss how FRG can prepare

Types of Unit Casualties

- Soldier injured
  - Very Seriously Injured or Ill (VSI)
  - Seriously Injured or Ill (SI)
  - Not seriously injured (NSI)
- Soldier death
- Mass casualty

Casualty Notification Process

- Commander reports incident to Casualty Operations Branch
- Casualty Area Command (CAC) produces casualty report after verifying incident
- Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) is assigned
- Family is notified
  - In person when deceased, Duty status-Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN), or MIA
  - By telephone when VSI or SI
  - No notification for NSI

Army's Casualty Response Team

- Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO)
- Chaplain
- Rear Detachment Commander (RDC)
- MEDFAC
- Public Affairs Officer

Casualty Assistance Officer's Role

Death

- Provides assistance with immediate needs
- Arranges emergency financial assistance, if needed
- Coordinates funeral arrangements
- Aids with personnel-related matters (e.g., benefits and entitlements)

Chaplain's Role

Injury

- Offer pastoral counseling, solace and comfort

Death

- Offer pastoral counseling, solace and comfort
- Provide information about funeral services, memorials and religious observances

RDC's Role

Injury

- Provides information and support to family
- Coordinates follow-on care for Soldiers
- Assembles care team, **if requested by family**
- Handles the media

Death

- Coordinates funeral honors team and memorial service
- Coordinates support needed by family
- Assembles care team, **if requested by family**
- Handles the media

Overview and Role of Care Team

- Support families of injured and deceased Soldiers.
- Is a small group of trained volunteers who provide short-term emotional and logistical support prior to affected family.
- Ask family if they want support from Care Team.
  - If family accepts, battalion RDC assembles a team of 3 to 6 individuals that family would most likely be comfortable with. RDC may appoint a Care Team leader.
- Provide support based upon family needs:
  - Call support
  - Home care assistance
  - Meal support
  - Babysitting or temporary childcare arrangements
  - Assist visiting family members
  - House sitting.
- Report to battalion RDC.

Role of Care Team (continued)

If asked to serve on care team, expectations are:

- Can step into role quickly (i.e., clear calendar, etc.)
- Keep to care team role:
  - Provide comfort and listen to family
  - Honor family's requests
  - Inform RDC and seek guidance when necessary
- Respect the family's privacy:
  - Maintain confidentiality
  - Never discuss family's reactions and plans
- Be nonjudgmental

MEDFAC's Role

- Medical Family Assistance Center (MEDFAC) is set up when WOMACK proclaims a Code Yellow in the hospital (i.e. high number of wounded, mass casualty, natural disaster, or terrorist attack)
- Provides information and support services to families of Soldiers who are patients at military medical facility

PAO's Role

- Responds to media
- Offers information and guidance to family and RDC on dealing with the media

FRG's Role When Unit Casualty

The company level FRG leader's responsibilities are:

- Contact RDC for guidance and direction
- Notify FRG members (i.e., unit families), per RDC's guidance
- Provide input into makeup of Care Team, if asked by RDC
- Determine how FRG can support Care Team assisting a family in their company
- Encourage and provide guidance to FRG members on how to support affected family
- Help unit families cope with the unit's casualty

Notifying and Supporting Unit Families

FRG leader's responsibilities are to:

- Arrange a briefing time and location, including child care, with RDC
- Have key callers contact family members about briefing with scripted message from RDC
- Arrange Chaplain to talk about grieving process, coping with traumatic events, and appropriate ways to talk to affected families
- Arrange PAO to talk about dealing with the media
- Provide guidance on how unit families can support the affected family

Ways FRG Members Can Support Affected Families

- Provide comfort and reassurance.
- Provide logistical support as needed (or after the Care Team leaves).
- Respect family's privacy.
- Be patient while families heal and adjust.

Guidance on Dealing with Grieving Families

What to say:

- "I'm sorry."
- "I care."
- "I know you are hurting."
- "Go ahead and cry."
- "I'll call you later."

What not to say:

- "Time heals everything."
- "It could have been worse."
- "It was God's will."
- "I know how you feel."
- "You have to be strong."
- "You have to forget about it."

Ways FRG can Support Care Team

- Provide meals for care team volunteers
- Prepare and give meals to care team who coordinates meal support for family
- Provide childcare for care team volunteers
- Provide transportation and other support as requested by care team

How FRG Can Prepare

BEFORE deployment, FRG leader's responsibilities are to:

- Talk with unit commander to discuss procedures for casualty situations and use of care teams
- Inform key callers of procedures and provide any necessary training

Things to Remember About FRG Role

- Unit commander (or RDC) will provide direction to FRG leader AFTER notification is made.
- FRG leader and some FRG members may be asked to serve on Care Team, but not always.
- FRG's role is to support the unit's families and to offer assistance to Care Team volunteers.